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Testimony in support of Raised SB 356 An Act Concerning Athletic Trainers

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Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and the honorable members of the Public Health Committee. I am the Program Director for Athletic Training education at Southern Connecticut State University. I speak with the privilege of educating athletic training students for 26 years and have observed personally the evolution of athletic training education. I would like to express my support for the raised bill to change the scope of practice for athletic trainers in Connecticut.

Historically, athletic trainers have provided care and rehabilitation for athletes at all levels of athletic competition. Whether it is prevention, providing acute care on the field or rehabilitating the conditions after surgery, the athletic trainer has been on the frontlines of safely returning athletes to practice and competition. However, as the profession has progressed, other types of patients and clients have come to appreciate and desire the services of athletic trainers.

One of the fastest growing areas of employment is the occupational setting where athletic trainers can use their unique skills in preventing injuries to reduce work time loss at various companies. The military has recognized the value of athletic trainers along with performing arts companies such as the Radio City Rockettes. In response several states have expanded their scopes of practice accordingly. Washington specifically permits athletic trainers to care for occupational injuries. Michigan permits athletic trainers to care for individuals. New York permits athletic trainers to provide care for 'comparable orthopedic injuries.' Ohio and Georgia permit athletic trainers to provide care for injuries due to physical activities requiring "physical strength, agility, flexibility, speed and stamina." Pennsylvania and Vermont allow an athletic trainer to care for the "physically active person."

The expanded athletic training employment settings are well-supported by athletic training education requirements. Athletic training students are instructed in identifying those conditions which may require referral to another health care profession. This instruction is infused across the curriculum and in specific courses that deal directly with the recognition of underlying health conditions and various medical issues common to a non-athletic population. And underlying it all is the education to

practice under the direction of a physician and to refer those cases that are beyond the athletic trainer's scope of practice.

In contrast, Connecticut's athletic training scope of practice law is one of the *most restrictive in the United States*. Besides limiting athletic trainers to athletes, it goes further by defining athletes to those individuals who participate in athletic activity at least 3 days per week. This prevents athletic trainers from providing care to pediatric athletes who often practice or play once or twice a week. It prevents athletic trainers from using their skills in prevention in the occupational setting, thereby increasing the crippling health care costs for employers in Connecticut. It blocks athletic trainers from providing care to individuals attempting to return to physical activity even though some of these same people are legally 'conditioned' by personal trainers who mark their education in hours not years.

It is clear that Connecticut's current athletic training scope of practice law does not reflect the educational training of the athletic training student and prevents athletic trainers from using their skills to the full extent of their abilities. This prevents physical active individuals from receiving the same care offered to professional athletes; this prevents athletic trainers from providing quality preventive care in the occupational setting driving up health care costs and prevents athletic trainers from providing care to certain population groups such as the child athlete. As important, it causes Connecticut residents graduating as athletic trainers from Connecticut colleges to leave the state in search of positions that permit them to do what they are trained to do.

In conclusion, I ask that you support SB 356 An Act Concerning Athletic Trainers. It will let athletic trainers provide care to the full limit of their education and training. It is good for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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